



## **AB 649, FRACKING MORATORIUM**

### **ASSEMBLYMEMBER ADRIN NAZARIAN**

#### **Background:**

“Hydraulic Fracturing” (fracking) is used to extract oil and gas throughout the United States. In California, fracking can be traced back to the 1950s and is typically used to extract oil, rather than natural gas.

In California, the fracking process has become increasingly popular in the last decade to keep up with the demand for oil. Fracking is the process whereby water and chemicals are pumped, with high pressure, into oil wells to create fractures (cracks) in the well’s rock formations. Sand is also used to keep the fractures open once the fracturing process is completed to allow for oil to be extracted. The mixture used is composed of 95% water, with the rest being chemicals.

Currently, there is no uniform statewide policy to track fracking practices; therefore, a lot of what we know about fracking is mere speculation as fracking operations are poorly monitored around the state. Information submitted by the industry is on a voluntary basis.

According to voluntary information submitted by the Western States Petroleum Association (WSPA) to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Water and the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality (Senate Committees), in 2011, “628 new and existing oil wells were fracked. This represents about 27% of the 2,300 new wells drilled or 1% of the more than 50,000 existing wells.”

Based on voluntary reporting collected by FracFocus, today there are 728 hydraulically fractured wells in California. The amount of water used in each well varies between 10,000 gallons to 200,000 gallons of water.

The water that is injected, into the wells, resurfaces and is mixed with other materials. “This wastewater can be treated and reused for fracking; discharged in surface water; or transported to wastewater treatment facilities. The exact disposal of wastewater is unknown because

the state does not track the final disposal method of fracking wastewater.” (Senate Committees)

#### **This bill:**

AB 649 defines fracking as the process of injecting fluids or gases into an underground geologic formation, with the intention of causing fractures in the formation, for the production of oil or gas from a well.

This bill temporarily halts fracking in any oil or gas well, if the well is located near an aquifer. AB 649 also bans the use of clean freshwater in fracking practices.

AB 649 requires the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency and the Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency to convene an advisory committee to develop a report on the health and environmental impacts of fracking on the following:

- Handling and disposition of produced water or wastewater.
- Contamination of groundwater or surface water.
- The supply and sources of water used in fracking and its impact on the state, regional, and local water supply.
- The process for managing accidental spills of chemicals used for fracking.
- Impacts on endangered species and their habitat.

No later than January 1, 2019, both agencies shall make a determination on whether fracking is to be permitted in the state and under what conditions.

#### **Purpose:**

AB 649 halts fracking practices, until the state conducts a full evaluation and identifies how and if fracking should proceed and to what extent. This is especially important as the Monterey Shale Formation could be the next area to be fracked for oil. The Monterey Shale is estimated to hold 15.4 billion barrels of oil, two-thirds of the United States’ shale-oil reserves. The area is a 1,750 square mile area that runs lengthwise through the state. The oil in the Monterey Shale can only be



## **AB 649, FRACKING MORATORIUM**

### **ASSEMBLYMEMBER ADRIN NAZARIAN**

removed using advanced oil-extraction technologies, such as horizontal drilling, which is the technic used in fracking.

Given that we cannot predict the long-term consequences of fracking in California, AB 649 places a temporary halt to this practice until a full and in-depth analysis is conducted on the procedure's potential effects on California's water supply.

Although the idea of increasing California's economic activity and creating new jobs is appealing, appropriate steps need to be taken to ensure that there is comprehensive oversight in the state and California's water sources are protected.

#### **Support:**

Center for Biological Diversity (Co-Sponsor)

Food and Water Watch (Co-Sponsor)

Clean Water Action Group (Co-Sponsor)

Physicians for Social Responsibility (Co-Sponsor)

#### **Opposition:**

None on file

#### **Staff Contact:**

Mariana Sabeniano

916.319.2046

[Mariana.Sabeniano@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Mariana.Sabeniano@asm.ca.gov)